MUNICIPALITIES

MANAMA MUNICIPALITY

(From the report of Mr. Mohamed Saleh Shater, Secretary of the Manama Municipality)

633 795 At the beginning of the year, owing to sectarian differences between Sunni and Shia members in 1371 A.H. which caused the resignation of the Shia members, Municipal affairs were being dealt with by a committee of Sunnis. This was the situation until the middle of the year when the Government succeeded in persuading the Shia members to resume their duties on the Council. They returned on the understanding that they would serve for only one year after which an election should be held.

During the latter part of the year the Council functioned in a more or less normal manner; by shelving all matters which might cause controversy between the sects the Council succeeded in performing its duties without serious differences. The situation, however, was not satisfactory.

633 **Finance.** The Financial Committee which drew up the budget was formed from the temporary Sunni committee. Estimated revenue for 1372 was Rs. 7,04,000 and expenditure was assessed at the same figure. The actual revenue exceeded the estimate by Rs. 1,16,000, the expenditure was Rs. 61,000 more than was expected and at the end of the year a surplus of revenue over expenditure amounting to Rs. 61,000 was added to the Reserve which was then Rs. 2,83,000.

651 427 The increase in revenue was due to a great extent to higher receipts from house and shop taxes. There were many new buildings in the town and higher rents were charged for existing buildings, both for houses and shops. House taxes and shop taxes on buildings which are leased are charged on a percentage basis of the rent. Taxation on houses which are occupied by their owners is extremely low in comparison with that of rented premises. A large proportion of the rented houses are occupied by foreigners and most of the houses in which the owners live are occupied by people of the country.

425 653 368 During the year the Municipality sold land to the public at the price of Rs. 35,200 and it purchased a new fire engine for Rs. 48,000. The Government presented to the Municipality a motor-driven trailer fire pump and jeep, a rubbish carrying vehicle and a gully emptying vehicle.

364 **Municipal activities.** Town cleaning was effected during the year by two trucks and 30 donkey carts, town rubbish was utilised to reclaim a large portion of sea on the shore at Hora, opposite Cable and Wireless premises. The method of employing donkey carts to carry town refuse is not a satisfactory one. An order was placed in England during the summer for small rubbish-carrying vehicles which can be used in narrow streets.

368 A number of roads in the town were metalled, the area dealt with was about 380,000 square feet on which was used 480,000 cubic feet of stone and 105,000 cubic feet of sand, the whole costing approximately Rs. 1,76,000.

363 247 Some progress was made in widening streets in the bazaar area, 112 new street lights were installed and more trees were planted on the roads, unfortunately each year a number of trees are destroyed, by wind or sometimes by rain which when it falls strongly seems to kill both plants and trees.

362 427 There was much building activity both in the town and on the outskirts of the town, numbers of small houses were built for occupation by their owners and more European style bungalows and flats were built for letting. House rents are excessively high, landlords expect to recover the cost of their property in less than ten years, so building houses for letting is at present a profitable investment. However, so many houses are now being built that it seems possible that in a short time there may be more houses than tenants.

633 342 During the year permits for new buildings were issued by the Municipality for 144 stone houses and 100 barasti huts and permits for repairs and additions to 186 shops and 717 houses were also granted.

1 [A.D. 1951-52 -- Analyst]

HIDD MUNICIPALITY

651 633 **Finance.** The total revenue was Rs. 28,739, slightly higher than in 1372. At the end of the year there was a surplus of Rs. 6,102. The amount expended was almost the same as in the previous year. At the end of the year His Highness granted Rs. 25,000 to the Municipal funds for building property to increase the Municipal revenue.

The town was clean and well kept and some progress was made in widening the one main street which passes through the length of the town.

RAFAA MUNICIPALITY

which includes East, West and North Rafaa

(From the report of Shaikh Abdulla bin Khalid, President of the Municipal Council)

651 633 363 This Municipality, the last one to be formed in Bahrain, having been established in 1371, carried out its duties successfully during the year. Its revenue was Rs. 37,000 of which Rs. 20,000 was a grant from the Government.

Houses were registered and numbered for the purpose of charging house tax and a piece of land below East Rafaa was laid out as a building area, in conjunction with the Land Department. The Municipality began work on widening the road which passes through East Rafaa and removed part of some houses in order to widen this road.

365 Repairs were carried out to Ain Hinainiyah, the old well on the plain below East Rafaa which provides fresh drinking water, which used to be sold in Manama at a high price, being of superior quality to the artesian well water.

364 Ancient rubbish heaps, which disfigured the edge of the town, were removed and the material was used to fill in deep pits, inside the town, where mud had been dug for building houses.

The Municipality began to establish a regular town cleaning service.

MINORS' ESTATES DEPARTMENT

(From the report of Mr. Mohammed Dowaiger, Superintendent of the Department)

471 657 The Department took over the administration of 18 new estates and dealt with 28 compensation cases relating to persons in the employment of the Bahrain Government and the Bahrain Petroleum Company. The value of the estates was Rs. 131,000. Compensation paid by the Bahrain Petroleum Company in cases of death or disablement of employees is passed by the Government to the Minors' Estates Department which pays the persons who are entitled to receive compensation.

657 427 Rents of property administered by the Department produced almost 2 lakhs, the number of properties, including shops, houses, gardens, etc., was 530. The Department sold nine lots of property during the year, for approximately half a lakh and made purchases amounting to Rs. 9,000. The sum of Rs. [illegible]000 was recovered from divers who were in debt to various estates.

Sales and Land Values. The aggregate value of the property which was sold was approximately 40 lakhs, £300,000. In the previous year prices reached a somewhat higher figure but they included several sales of large areas of land on the edge of Manama. There has been no fall in land prices and there are no indications of a change in the situation. High prices are still being paid for building sites in Manama on which European style houses, flats and bungalows, are being built, which are let at excessively high rents. When the demand for houses of this type begins to lessen then rents will decrease and there are some signs that this event is not far off, several recently built houses have "To Let" notices on their doors. At present as much as Rs. 1,000/- per month is being charged for a three-bedroom, dining-sitting-room bungalow on the Jufair Road.

A recent satisfactory development has been the demand by working class men to buy small building plots in Manama, Muharraq, Hidd and Rafaa. The building loan schemes of the Government and the Bahrain Petroleum Company have stimulated this development. At one time people were satisfied to live in hired houses or barastis for which they paid rent but now, partly owing to the rapaciousness of landlords and partly because it has become everyone's ambition to own the house in which he lives, there is an active demand for plots of ground on which small houses can be built. Unfortunately the Government owns very little land in and around Manama and nobody wishes to live even at a short distance from the bazaar, the schools and the cinemas.

The most important sales were an Arab style house in the southern district of Manama, on Shaikh Isa Road, which was sold for Rs. 200,000 and a plot of land in the Qudhabia district which was bought by the Government as a site for workmen's dwellings for Rs. 2,57,000, at Rs. 2/5 per square foot. The Government sold 87 plots of land, in various places, for Rs. 3.50,000. Land on the edge of the towns of Manama and Muharraq was sold at prices ranging from Rs. 1/4 to Rs. 3/- per square foot. Thirty building plots were sold at East Rafaa, on the plain below the town, to residents of Rafaa, at 2 Annas per square foot. Land on this site was marked out as a residential area with rows of plots of uniform depth along future roads. At the end of the year a few purchasers had begun to build stone houses on the ground which they bought.

Legislation. In Safar (October 1952) an important Ordinance was issued which prohibited all persons subject to Bahrain jurisdiction from disposing of any property except to Bahrain subjects. An extension of this order was issued later providing for the contingency of heirs in an estate of a Bahrain subject being themselves foreign subjects. The result of these Ordinances was that not only were Bahrain subjects restricted from selling their property to foreigners but all persons subject to Bahrain jurisdiction, Persians, subjects of Saudi Arabia and of other Gulf States, were restricted from selling their property to each other or to nationals of other countries. Only foreigners not under the jurisdiction of the Bahrain Courts were free to sell their property to other foreigners. The object of the Government is to prevent land in Bahrain from being alienated and it is hoped that in future this legislation will be further extended to preclude all foreigners in Bahrain from disposing of their property to any persons who are not Bahrain subjects.

The imposition of this ordinance caused some resentment among foreigners especially among Saudi Arabians and Persians who in the past have acquired extensive property in Bahrain. This ordinance was probably the cause of some reduction in the number of large land sales during 1372.

One of the reasons why the Government now has so little land at its disposal in Manama and on the outskirts of the town is because in the past large pieces of land were either sold or given to Persians and Saudi Arabians. In the former category is one of the principal landowners in the town. The only area of any size, suitable for development as a housing area, is the land on the south-west of Manama which is now occupied by the installations of Cable and Wireless Ltd. Arrangements are being made for the Company to move out into the country to a site on the Aali plain, but this move will take some time to be carried out.

Rents of Government Shops. The Department collected rents amounting to Rs. 51,000/- from the shops in Barrett Road and from the flat above the Post Office and Rs. 20,000/- from rents of 26 plots of land which were let on leases. Temporary leases of land produced Rs. 3,800.

5: Bahrain G-5 (1926-1937) 1937 MZ2 Bahrain MZ2

need not be registered, but the existence of a Government title deed ensures that the property is free from claims. Before this rule was made, cases frequently occured in the courts in which the same property was mortgaged to two different people.

Government Title Deeds. Government title deeds are hand-written documents in Arabic, describing the property with all measurements, boundaries, water rights, and particulars, and on the reverse of each title deed there is a plan of the property with measurements shown in feet and inches. The documents are signed on both sides by the Ruler, the Adviser, and the Superintendent of the Land Department. A person wishing to register his property makes a written application to the Land Registration Department. The property is surveyed by the Land Department surveyors in the presence of the owner or his agent, or, in the case of a sale, in the presence of both parties; if necessary, boundary pillars are erected. A proclamation is then issued, calling on all persons having any claim on the property to submit claims in writing within fifteen to thirty days in the case of a sale, and ninety days in the case of registration of ownership. Claims are forwarded to the Bahrain Court by the Land Department and are decided by the court, which also examines all applications for titles before the final documents are issued. The procedure is somewhat slow, but it is effective, and since it has been in force the number of disputes about land, boundaries, water rights, and fish-traps is gradually declining. Fees are charged for registration of sales according to a sliding scale in the case of sales, depending upon the sale price, and at a fixed rate in the case of registration of ownership. The fees in the latter case are low and do not cover in some cases the cost of the work, but it is to the advantage of the public and the Government that as much property as possible should be registered and, to encourage registration, fees are small. Between 400 and 500 title deeds have been issued by the department every year during the last ten years, and each year there has been a gradual but steady ncrease in applications for registration of ownership.

Fish-Traps. In 1353 (1934) all fish-traps round the coast of Bahrain and the various islands were registered, and rules were laid down with the object of preventing people from erecting and then claiming ownership to fish-traps on Government property. It was enacted that the owners of fish-traps had no rights over the boundaries mentioned in their title deeds, except as far as protection from other persons who might wish to erect fish-traps within the area described. In many cases great pieces of the sea were described in old documents as being the boundaries of a certain fish-trap, and if full ownership to these areas was admitted, valuable land along the foreshore would be lost to the Government if the owners chose to reclaim it. The department dealt with the question of a batch of very valuable traps close to the Bahrain Petroleum Company's pier at Sitrah, and was mainly responsible for arranging a settlement between the Bahrain Petroleum Company and the owners of the traps.

Land Leases and Government Forms. In addition to survey and registration work, the Land Department is responsible for leasing Government land, mostly in the neighbourhood of Manamah, to persons who live upon it in Barastis. The rents are very low, but the existence of a regular agreement between the Government and the occupier of the ground ensures that the Government retains its ownership of the land. In Bahrain, ten years' undisputed and uninterrupted occupation is sufficient to establish the ownership of the ground. Printed Government forms, the use of which is compulsory in the case of senads, powers of attorney, and diving 'barwas,' etc., are sold by the Land Department, and every year over 15,000 of these forms are purchased by the public.

The revenue collected by the Land Department does not cover the cost of the department, but the value of land registration to the Government and to the public is very great. The continued success of the registration work can only be ensured as long as the principle that Government title deeds, when once issued, cannot be contested is maintained. Frequent attempts have been made, usually by influential personages, to set aside title deeds, but so far without success. If one case of this kind should meet with success, the whole system would be seriously affected.